R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 011 725 EC 000 245

STUTTERING--ITS PREVENTION. THE OPINIONS OF CERTAIN AUTHORITIES, CONFERENCE ON THE PREVENTION OF STUTTERING (ACAPULCO, DECEMBER 27, 1961 TO JANUARY 2, 1962). JANUARY 2, 1962, PUB. NO 3).

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REPORT NUMBER SFA-PUB-3 PUB DATE 62
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.18 HC-$2.36 59P.

DESCRIPTORS- *STUTTERING, *SPEECH HANDICAPPED, PREVENTION, PARENT ROLE, SPEECH IMPROVEMENT, ACAPULCO

WRITTEN FOR PARENTS, THIS BOOKLET IS DESIGNED TO HELP PREVENT STUTTERING IN CHILDREN. COMMUNICATION AND SPEECH BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD IS TRACED DEVELOPMENTALLY FROM BIRTH. THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TOWARD THE CHILD, SPEECH, AND CONVERSATION IS DISCUSSED. PARENTS ARE GIVEN SUGGESTIONS TO HELP THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD SPEECH. SITUATIONS WHICH MAY HAMPER SPEECH DEVELOPMENT AND CAUSE STUTTERING ARE DISCUSSED ALONG WITH RECOMMENDATIONS OF HOW PARENTS SHOULD HANDLE THE PROBLEM. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM SPEECH FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, 152 LOMBARDY ROAD, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, FOR $0.25. (MY)

ED011725

Stuttering:

ITS PREVENTION: SPEECH FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

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Stuttering *ITS PREVENTION*

The Opinions of Certain Authorities

Derived from the report of
a week's conference on the prevention of stuttering
held at Acapulco, Mexico
ending January 2, 1962

Conference sponsored and this report published by the
SPEECH FOUNDATION OF AMERICA
Publication No. 3

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Speech Foundation of America
152 Lombardy Road
Memphis, Tennessee

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The Reason for this Booklet

This booklet is written for all parents who do not want their children to stutter, and particularly for those parents of very young children who think they have some reason to be concerned about their child's speech.

The advice and suggestions in this booklet are the result of a week's conference on the prevention of stuttering among some of the leading authorities of the country, held at Acapulco, Mexico, and sponsored by the Speech Foundation of America—a charitable organization dedicated to the prevention and relief of stuttering.

The speech correction authorities listed on the following pages were invited to attend the conference and write this booklet. These men have particularly distinguished themselves in the field of stuttering and all but one are Fellows of the American Speech and Hearing Association which is the leading professional organization in the speech correction field.

The chairman of the conference was Stanley Ainsworth—a past president of the American Speech and Hearing Association--and the writing was edited by Albert Murphy of Boston University. We believe you will find this information both interesting and educational.

MALCOLM FRASER

For the Speech Foundation of America
Memphis, Tennessee
September 1, 1962

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PART I

Let Us Begin . . .

We are presenting the thoughts which follow in an effort to prevent the disorder of stuttering. There are many views concerning the nature of stuttering, but certainly, in its lowest common denominator, stuttering includes a difficulty in the joining-together of words. There are many forces that can produce this difficulty and, in the pages to follow, we have attempted to describe them. But here we are making a plea to parents to resolve that when a child is first learning to speak in words-in-sequence, they make a conscious effort to do what they can to help him. It may be that under even the very best of conditions some children will begin to stutter anyway, but let us make sure that the odds are in their favor, and that we do not unknowingly put obstacles in their paths. We have the feeling that if a child can get certain kinds of help in the early years his chances of becoming a stutterer will be markedly lessened. To that important goal, this booklet is dedicated.

In every recorded history of races and nations we find references to famous figures who stuttered. Many instances of civic accomplishment, literary, and artistic and scientific achievement by stutterers can be found—past and present. But stuttering rarely improves the chances of personal happiness. Usually it interferes with success, sometimes seriously. Insofar as we can reduce the problem of stuttering we increase the goodness of interpersonal communication in our society, thereby improving our social establishment; we increase the harmony of individual families; we strengthen the wellbeing of individuals. All of this can be done, we believe, by preventing children, babies, and babies yet to be born from developing the handicap of stuttering.

We devote these pages, not to a discussion of a cure of stuttering already acquired, but to the discussion of such an upbringing of the young child as will reduce the chance of his becoming a confirmed stutterer. Some children will become stutterers no matter how sincere the parents or how well suggestions are car-

ried out. On the other hand, many children, both boys and girls, who would otherwise stutter will avoid the handicap. This we believe. Stuttering (at least the kind of stuttering that the public recognizes by that name) begins usually in that bridge in time between babyhood and childhood. We will examine very carefully the steps in that period of change, for it is in that phase that social speech begins. If speech begins normally, stuttering is usually prevented. It is out of shaky speech beginnings that stuttering often springs. The speech learning period is therefore the parting of the ways between the stutterer and the non-stutterer; and once the ways have parted, the stutterer may find it difficult to get back to normalcy. The effort to reduce stuttering, therefore, is best spent in the attempt to keep the child in the normal course of speech development. The major portion of this booklet is devoted to that end.

What Are We After?

So that readers and writers may share the same reference point, let us begin by stating what stuttering is. To most people, stuttering is simply what a person does in his speech. But a complete definition includes other factors, such as one's picture of himself or an uneasiness about speech or related aspects of his behavior. More specifically, stuttering may be revealed by one or more of the following characteristics: (1) facial distortions, blockings, strugglings, prolongations, breaks in rhythm of speech, or other signs of breakdown in the forward flow of speech to a degree that sets the speaker off from his associates; (2) an understanding between speaker and listener that stuttering actually has taken place—that is, that the speaker is trying to speak without these interferences, but often fails in his attempts; (3) some feelings of frustration and helplessness brought on by the difficulty plus the fear of possible difficulty; (4) some feelings of fearfulness or concern about the ability to speak at all; (5) anxiety concerning uncertainties—not necessarily connected directly with speaking—and which interferes with speaking ability; and (6) the speaker's having a picture of himself as a stutterer, perhaps a troubled awareness that his way of talking is unnatural and is disturbing to the listener.

From these statements about stuttering we may infer that when the speaker is in such comfortable relationship to the listener that he does not hesitate or repeat, he is not stuttering. Neither is he stuttering if, though he hesitates and repeats, he is not anxious about it, but regards his hesitations as normal and also recognizes that his listener so thinks of them.

Now let us move more closely to our task. We have said that keeping a normal course of speech development forms the core of prevention. So we will want to consider just how a child actually does learn to talk. We will want to identify the factors leading to good speech in addition to those leading to stuttering speech. And we will make specific suggestions as to how to bring about good speech and how to steer clear of stuttering speech. But as a background statement for what is to follow, we wish to say this: we recognize that good speech is influenced very importantly by the kinds of relationships existing between child and listener. So we will talk of the wondrous flux and flow of attitudes and behavior between child and adults, and of factors in this interaction which could hinder or help the child in his attempts to achieve speech which is not marred by broken words. We realize that in even the best of family situations, stuttering may occur; after all, children vary enormously in their sensitivity and it is the rare parent indeed who achieves the ideal. If the parent becomes concerned because the child sometimes hesitates or repeats, it will become very important for the parent to attempt to understand just what is happening; to try to understand the thoughts and feelings of the child. In the speech learning period it is difficult to tell if there is a problem of stuttering. One of the purposes of this booklet is to help the parent to recognize whether such a problem does exist.

Before the Word . . .

To understand and appreciate completely the beauty of a fully bloomed flower, we need to know its origins, the soil out of which it grew, the tender handling it received in its cultivation, in short, its beginning. "As the twig is bent . . ." goes the saying. So with speech—its eventual full-blooming depends on its beginnings. Speech emerges from many soils—physical, intellectual,

social. Its development is affected by all experiences which flavor an infant's feelings about interacting, communicating with other human beings. And we mean experiences from the very early days, during the first year of life. The foundations leading to the development of normal speech are being built in these early days. Here is why.

Growing up is a hurdle-jumping affair. And each hurdle is a bit higher and a bit more difficult than the one before. The child's learning to roll over, to sit up, to pull up to a standing position, to walk; these are one row of hurdles he must pass. Trouble with one leaping makes the next more difficult. A goal-line (at least in speaking) is reached when the child achieves speech as good as that of his parents, or better. This is what we want for all of our children. But to gain that goal, the child must have passed over many prior hurdles. Most children succeed. Some have a harder time. They may need some coaching.

But this picture of how children learn to talk may seem a bit strange. What are these hurdles our children must run? Let us tell you. And the first thing we want to say is that in order to learn to speak well, the child must succeed in many kinds of behavior which are not strictly speech activities at all. We want to express the following idea very strongly: how a child feels about speaking and how he comes to express himself in speech depends very much on the kinds of relationships he has had with his parents before ever saying his first words. The mastery of speech does not come with "Daddy" or "Bye-Bye." Like the flower, speech starts growing unseen. It begins in the mother's arms, in the basic relationships involving communication between parent and child. Mother and child in tune with each other, imitating each other's expressions and gestures and babblings, talking to each other through holding, touching, and the sharing of close tenderness. These are the heartstuff of communication. This is what parents must understand about the beginnings of becoming human.

The tiny infant speaks to us in many ways. He speaks with his body as with his mouth. Body English is his first speech but he also speaks in shrieks, babbles, and vocal pitch changes. He speaks even when he cries or smiles. He may be communicating, saying something very important to us, when he is silent. All of

these are ways in which he tells us of his needs, his wants, his comforts and discomforts, his feelings.

If this pre-speech communication between parent and child has been satisfying, then the soil in which good speech can grow will have been well prepared. For now the child will want to learn more, to do more of this kind of activity which he has found to be satisfying. Communicating will be good. Let's put it differently by saying this: pleasant feelings about one way of communicating or speaking lead to a desire and a comfort in learning new, more socially useful ways of communicating. Good body English generates good oral English, or Hungarian or Scambodian. Let us talk about this "Body English." The infant tells his story to the mother through changes in skin color and body temperature, through changes in breathing. When he sucks we know he is telling us it's time to ring the dinner bell. Gradually, hands reach, legs stretch and other movements unfold. Slowly, more specific actions emerge. His face "lights up"; he smiles. We smile. Movements have meanings. Now what happens when there is little or no response to this body English? The child feels defeated. His efforts only frustrate him. No one enjoys failing repeatedly. It may be less painful to stop trying altogether. Indifference may be the result. None of us want this for our children. We have learned that children who do not get enough mothering tend to fall behind or to develop other problems in learning to speak. Research with infants in institutions where the nurse or attendant has to be mother to eight or ten or more children often supports this observation. Certainly, we can say this: The close and tender relationship of a natural mother to her child from the very earliest days is so very crucial. This mother-child one-ness is the lubricating oil in the whole machinery of the speech-learning process. Let's take a longer look at a few of these parent-child relationships.

For example, parents learn very soon, often in the wee hours of successive mornings, that the newborn can communicate vocally—he *cries* loud and long. The message is clear: "I'm wet and I'm hungry." Let's assume that his crying is steadfastly ignored (perhaps the parents are afraid they'll spoil him). A very natural reaction results: the child begins to link vocal behavior with the unpleasantness, the aloneness which so often

follows: ("Every time I cry, something uncomfortable happens.") But what if, instead of rebuff, the crying is followed by a comforting mother? Then the vocal behavior becomes linked with pleasantness. This is one way in which the feelings of children about vocal expression develop. And, as we have stressed, how a child feels about communicating in one form of vocal behavior has important implications for the mastering of a form of vocal behavior which will be even more rewarding—making sounds which the parents react to with delight—speech sounds, for instance.

The language of gestures runs similar risks. Through gestures the child gives us an idea of his needs; he conveys information; he learns that gestures can be very useful socially. What is he saying when he leans forward, purses his lips and extends his arms? He's telling us something important: "I want more food." If his gesture language is rewarding (more rewarding, for example, than crying), he'll continue to use it, to experiment with it, to try new ways. He will be taking more leaps forward. As parent and child exchange gestures, they speak to each other. When these moments are deeply satisfying to both, then again the meaning of such interplay in terms of the child's attitude toward communicative efforts is fairly clear. The child will want to continue, to become more adept in behavior which is so rewarding. He likes it and he wants more of what he likes. But perhaps gestural language is not responded to lovingly. Perhaps it is not responded to often enough; or perhaps it occurs in a setting in which family bickering is the rule. The feelings he then ties in to communication spell trouble. Such feelings are likely to interfere with his ability and motivation to move ahead to more advanced ways of speaking. ("Why should I keep on doing something which is so often followed by unpleasantness?")

The child communicates in these many ways. And our assumption in relation to them is not profound but it is basic and heartfelt. We believe that pleasant feelings about these *non*-speech communicative efforts improve the child's chances of moving steadily forward in subsequent *speech* efforts. The flower will blossom if the seedlings are well tended. And the opposite is true.

There are two sides to this communicative link-fence. For the parents themselves are speaking to the child in body English

(holding the little one closely and tenderly, for example), in gestures, in facial expressions. Not only does the child's attitude toward communicative behavior depend on how the parents react to his performances; his attitudes depend also on the kinds of emotions the parents themselves express when they speak. Does not the child say much to us through tone changes and rhythms? All of these ways of communicating are not speech acts as such, but they certainly tell a story. And, indeed, parents themselves express a good deal of the way the wind blows through tonal tricks which seem to crop up very naturally. It is possible to say "I like you" and have the phrase carry the sting of a rattler. When we talk, we often reveal basic truths and attitudes which even we ourselves do not completely understand. Ah, yes, there are many ways of speaking. We must listen to ourselves more often, and perhaps to others a bit more differently.

Now for a few final words on this topic. It is helpful to remember that children, for a very long time, continue to use these "before-speech" ways of speaking. We adults do, also. As we speak, we gesture, we smile or frown, we blush or pale, we become silent. None of us can be sensitive in a constant and highly discriminating manner to all such behavior—the child's or our own. That would be asking for the unreasonable. But if parents can become a little more sensitive to these non-verbal ways of talking, our appreciation of what is needed to create fully blossomed speech in the child will be strengthened. Our appreciation of the fuller meaning of speech in older children, in adults, and in ourselves, will deepen. And these appreciations are so very much to the good.

We Are Not the Same

Suddenly, perhaps, one day we realize that our child has been with us for about a year now. Each week has brought new speech sounds and syllables. Not yet have these become words. They are jumbles. But they are the building blocks for words, and he is beginning to put them together so that they sound more and more like his parents' speech. He jumbles. Parents jumble back, increasingly in a way which is closer to normal word pronouncement. The child stretches to reach the parental

way of speaking, and one day he succeeds—he says his first word. He has cleared another hurdle, a high one. A great moment.

Some children will leap this hurdle sooner than others. Sometimes the time-difference is considerable. But this is the nature of the race—all of us have heard about "individual differences." There is variation among children in terms of learning to develop speech or to speak fluently. Some children, by nature, simply are less fluent than others. For some children these differences reflect a basic variation in ability to handle the physical and mental complexities that speech requires. For others, they may result from lack of similarity in emotional sensitivity and adjustment. Or perhaps it is behavior which has been learned; sometimes a particular blend of events and attitudes will stimulate and tend to freeze a certain way of talking. The important thing is this: children (and adults, too) differ a great deal in their ability to speak fluently. There are many degrees of fluency and many kinds of speech interruptions. Not only is this true when we compare children with one another. We often find quite a lot of variation within the same child at different times, in different situations. And, all the while, the parents may be varying in the way they are reacting to the child's speech. We are going to speak more about this important topic a bit later. For now we simply want to stress the point that not only do we generally accept a wide range of individual differences as normal—we also expect and accept a wide range of fluency within the same child.

Consider this: there are animals that have cleft palates, and animals that cannot hear; the giraff has no voice. But there never was an animal that stuttered. You've got to be human to stutter because stuttering reveals itself in speech—the one unique accomplishment of the human race.

In order to join this human race, we demand that our hairless offspring learn two essential skills: that they get up on their hind legs and learn to walk—and even more important, that they learn to talk. The baby's first steps and the baby's first words are hailed in every family throughout the world as crucial evidence that he has joined the clan. And mothers everywhere do their utmost to help their children at this important time. They patiently help him rise and balance and totter. They reward with a flood of love the baby's first ungainly ambulation. They

give him time and they give him care and they give him help. And he learns to walk alone, upstairs and downstairs, on his uncharted explorations. And, barring misfortune, he keeps on walking more easily and effortlessly and automatically all the rest of his days.

The other great skill, talking, is often viewed in much the same way by parents. Babies learn to walk; babies learn to talk. In their view, the process is much the same. The mother works tirelessly and again with patience and love to evoke those first words. They are displayed and rewarded and held up for admiration. And once they have come, we tend to feel that, like walking, talking is on the way. We've taught him to say "Baby" and "Daddy" and many other words, and the big job is done. We've given him the push, and feel confident that he will continue to improve in his talking just as he did when he walked.

But talking is not walking. It requires much more of the human than the relatively simple act of balancing, falling forward a bit and balancing again as one alternates the legs. Talking is complicated—it is very complicated. Speech is more than words you can hear, more than moving your mouth and tongue. It is the vehicle of thought—even in large measure the very means of thought; it is the way we manipulate others to get what we want; it is the carrier of messages. And that is not all. Speech is the safety valve that drains off the pressure of emotional boilers. Speech is the portrait of the self. We are not exaggerating. We are over-simplifying. Speech is the most wondrous, most complicated act ever performed by a living thing.

If this is true, then we could hardly expect that learning to talk would be as simple a task as learning to walk. When the baby says his first simple words he has just begun. He can, he must continue to learn to exploit this verbal magic all the rest of his life. It will bring him the things he needs. It may even bring him the things he wants. It might just possibly help him not only to conquer the earth and the stars but even himself.

What we are implying is this: Perhaps it won't matter much if parents stop helping the child learn to walk once he begins to navigate from the play-pen to the bathroom and beyond; but it is not right (indeed it is woefully wrong) for parents to give up

the responsibility for helping a child move onward in acquiring speech. This talking is a magical thing. Its full powers are not to be gotten easily. Like all good things, it needs a bit of nursing, a bit of help and facilitation. It needs some tending. We have spoken of the baby's first word as though it were an important milestone. So it is, and as a milestone it points to another—even more important, the milestone that indicates that the emerging human has begun to join words together. We say casually that the child has begun to speak in sentences. Ah, but this is no moment for casualness. This is a major achievement. This is when a child learns to fashion and to unfold a thought.

We want to look carefully and to appreciate this landmark in speech development. There is a great new skill appearing here. The moment a child can free himself from the limitations of a single outburst, a single word, a single cry, and discovers that he can add and join and qualify and shape his language, he lifts himself to a new plane. He loses his shackles and speech takes wing. If you desire to understand, try confining all of your speaking for an entire morning to the utterances of single words only. This learning to join together is a great leap forward and, sadly, few parents seem to understand its true significance. They also fail to understand that here, too, a child needs help even more than when he gropes to find his first baby words. For some months, for a year or two, his joining together of words to send messages, to formulate thought, to express emotion will be the child's chief business. We are asking that it also be the parents' business. This is a tough time for the new human. There is so much to learn—so much, and in our culture, so soon. This is the time he needs help and patience and, above all, understanding.

Models for Fluency

We have watched many parents teaching their children the first word. Most of them do it very well. But those very same parents a year later seem completely oblivious to the difficulties their children are having in stringing their words together to make sense. We are, in a sense, speaking for those children when we ask parents to simplify their speech models, to ease the demands for immediate utterance, to provide time for the unreeling of

thought, to be permissive and warm and loving. All we ask of parents is that they recognize that these few months and years are the critical months and years. There will be other times when the child will need help, but none as important as this period. What we are asking is that parents realize that talking is not walking.

Let us make clear immediately that we are not asking parents to become drillmasters. In the teaching of talking there is no need for formal lessons, for set routines, for testing. These are our flesh and blood, not our pupils. And they are not parrots or dogs to be conditioned. They are human. All they need is opportunity and good models and a bit of loving care. They will learn. They will learn. Indeed, many of them will find their way to the possession of many of the magical powers of speech no matter what barriers are placed in their paths. Others may need extra help, yet all will learn. But none of us who are parents want our children to struggle desperately only to half-learn what might be achieved more efficiently and easily. We know well that speech is the Open Sesame to the good things of life. We want to smooth the path.

What, then, can parents do to help in this learning? We offer no new discovery, no new formula. Indeed, the best way to help a child learn to speak fluently is as old as the human race itself. Simply stated it is this: we must provide appropriate models for the child to follow. Mexicans, Patagonians, Norwegians, yea, even the people who inhabit the Island of Auk, all the motley crew of us have done these things instinctively to help our children learn to talk.

But we have acted casually, without understanding, without knowing what we have done. Some of us have not done these things too well. And some of us have had special children who needed better tending and more help than can be had by such casual, instinctive, inconsistent methods. In this booklet we are trying to awaken parents to the age-old heritage of the race, the knowledge of how to help their children to talk well.

Specifically, we want to prevent stuttering. There have been too many stutterers with us too long. Now we know well that stuttering is not the sole, the one and only affliction that bedevils

us. Humans are beset by many troubles. But we feel strongly that if parents can understand, we might very well have a good chance to spare many children yet unborn the troubles of a tangled tongue and the miseries of a stuttering life in a talking world. And so we say to parents this: it is our seriously considered opinion that, during the formative years, when you speak to your child, you speak simply, and a bit more slowly and smoothly. We say, to avoid the compound, complex sentences, the endless paragraphs of continuous utterance, the ceaseless flow of disjointed talk. You may not know how often you speak this way, how often you present to your child speech no infant could ever hope to match. We have listened to your voices and we know that you could do better. Surely, at this time, he needs something within his reach. Please, speak to your child simply. And when, in turn, you hear him, say a clean sentence, turn a neat phrase, or punch out a final period, paragraph, very truly yours—give him the grin or the touch that tells him you know.

But there are other ways of speaking, other models besides simplicity of word order. All of us know that at times we falter and hesitate in our speech because we are faltering in the gathering of our thoughts. The little child finds this source of hesitancy often. Is there no way that we can help here? Again we ask for the obvious: that parents set a model by thinking aloud, so that their children can hear them. This will not seem unusual within the familiarity of the home. First there is the sharing of *commentary*. All of us do this. "See, over there, the horse. Brown horse. He's running. Oh, look at him go." Parents need to show their children how to mold experience into the words of thought. Children soon learn how to think aloud and speak more smoothly when parents show them by a play-by-play account what they are seeing or hearing, feeling or doing. Let parents then do more self-talk; let the child hear what goes on inside the black box of the mind.

In these models of self-talk, the parents should also provide illustrations of predicting and samples of recall. Let the samples be simple: "Oh, see. One more block on top. Blocks going to fall down! And blocks fall down." If we are to be thinkers we must learn to predict—let us use speech for this early training in prediction. Similarly, let parents show models of verbal recall. Words

are the hands with which we hold the past. Every day should have moments when the parent and child remember good things together and aloud. Remembering together, commenting together, predicting together; these are not only ways of boosting fluent verbal thinking. These are communion, itself. But if we are to have easy fluency in speaking, we must provide some models of fluent commentary, prediction and recall for our children to share and follow.

Letting Out the Poison

But speech is also the way we blow off steam, vent the emotional acids. Many of us falter in this expression. Many of us never learn the magical power of speech to deal with emotion. Many little children, otherwise fairly fluent, find their mouths stumbling when their anxieties, hostilities, or guilt feelings cannot be bottled up another little moment. The mouth is the vent of vents. Let us show our children that they can ease themselves by opening their mouths and letting the evils come out in words, that we can bear them, that we can even share them. Troubles shared are thereby halved, whittled down to bearable size. It is by transforming the roily squirting of the glands into the magic of words that we become more able to handle the bitter stuff. If we can help our children learn to handle their emotions, we have given them new powers which can stand them in good stead all the rest of the days of their lives.

Perhaps at this point the mother may object. She knows well that there are things better left unsaid. Not all the monsters that prowl the depths of our beings should be dragged up and hung up for all to view. We do not want our children to be foul-mouthed, aggressive or complaining little terrorists. We agree. We ask only of parents that occasionally they show their children that it is all right to verbalize a fear, to confess a bit of sinning, to express an anger. But we say *show*, not tell. If parents will again provide examples then children will follow them. When the father whose newspaper has been scattered by a careless child can storm, then say, "Son, I'm sorry I got mad. I guess I didn't understand how much you wanted to get up on my lap. I'm awfully tired," he is setting up a model that may be the most

important gift he can leave to his son. Let us do this verbalizing of our emotions with discretion but let us do it. Let us provide models appropriate and suitable to the child's needs. Our children will need to vent their devilish feelings a thousand thousand times before they too are parents. Must they say these things fearfully, reluctantly, hesitatingly? Again we insist that these recommendations would be good for any child. But we want to stress hard that for the child who tends to be hesitant in his speaking, they are as important as milk. At least let us do what we must to alter the odds. Moreover, such expression might be good for us parents, too.

There are many other ways in which parents can provide good models for their children to follow. We are thinking here of such things as instructions, explanations, commands. Many a little child has gone astray in his behavior merely because the parent failed to make clear what the limits were, what should be done. We must be careful in these formative years to be clear, not rambling and vague in what we say to the child. We can let our mouths wander aimlessly when we talk to others, but during this period, when we talk to our sons and daughters, let us speak with pith and point. Let's remember that what they hear determines what they will do.

The Gentle Art of Reading Alone Together

In this connection, and almost as an aside. we'd like to say something about reading aloud to the child. We have watched many such sessions. We know that reading aloud can be very good—or very bad, like young girls or old cheese. Certainly, when mother and child are close and loving and the words are more lullaby than speech, this reading is sheer pleasure for both. But we have known other sessions which become a shambles of interruptions, or frustrations. Personally, we also feel that often this reading aloud creates false standards of fluency as models for the child, standards which are far beyond his grasp. The words and experiences recounted are often too strange and unsuitable. The sentences blend into paragraphs and the paragraphs into pages and if this is what the child thinks he must duplicate when he talks, he is bound to feel clumsy and hesitant. Even we

who are parents cannot talk as fluently as we can read for we, too, must search for our thoughts. Such models may be beyond the grasping mouths of our children. We do not want to say that reading aloud is inherently dangerous. It is not. While some confusions may result from reading materials too complex and too adult to very young children, the shared activity of reading can mean much to the child. This is especially true of children at years three, four, five and beyond. But let's not read too much too fluently to the babies in our laps. Let us instead talk to them, tell them the tales of the printed page, let them interrupt and talk to us in their turn. Oh, there are times to read to them for lullaby just as there are times to hum the old tunes that comforted us when we were half past two. But let us not unknowingly give our children the impression that this reading aloud is the way people talk.

Conversationally Speaking

It is time we spoke more about stuttering, since this is what we want to prevent. First, let us repeat that stuttering is not simply a defect in the making of speech sounds. It is not a problem of abnormal voice. Only in a general sense can we view it as a disorder of speech. Rather, it is a difficulty in the act of conversing with others. The stutterer seldom has trouble in talking to himself, in singing. It occurs primarily in the conversational act.

What do we mean by conversing? So far as the speaker is concerned, it means that at least one other person is listening to him. Why do we need, why do we hunger so much for this conversing. There are many needs being satisfied in the ceaseless ebb and flow of conversation that fills the atmosphere of earth. We talk to gain new experiences, tickling our tongues and minds with new thoughts, new feelings, new information. We talk to get favorable attention, to say: "Lo! Here I am," to escape from the loneliness of anonymity. We talk to make people like and respect us. This give and take of conversation is an interchange. We swap experiences. "Watch me, Daddy," the child says as he wobbles on his bicycle, and he hopes that you will understand his triumph and delight. There are even times when a child talks

to punish others for conduct that offends him. He smears them with his "naughty" words, or he deals with them according to their just desserts by playing the conversational game with stubborn silences more eloquent than any words. The child talks for many reasons, sometimes to influence himself; but usually he converses to influence his listeners in one way or another.

Social survival in this world of words demands an ability to converse. Surely, he who is unable to do so must be a frustrated and lonely soul. And so we hope that our offspring will learn the skill of sharing word and thought without stuttering. We can help them to learn the art. In fact, we must help, for it is not an art that springs up mushroom-like; it must be guided. We would like now to offer a few guideline thoughts that might help you to keep your proper bearings as you navigate the child, now no longer quite an infant, through the sometimes choppy waters of conversation-learning.

Would we not all agree on this: that a speaker, a child attempting to speak, needs to feel that others want to hear what he has to say. A bit of interested attention does much. It beckons. It encourages. It gives a good flavor to the experience. It leads the child to further attempts. Oh, often it is far from easy. Pots boil over and telephones ring while the dog will scratch at the door. But there will be quieter times and the tiny moments of extra attention to speech efforts will be rewarded. And it will take a little extra effort to be patient—for the child is learning, and as he learns, as he grows, he will struggle to blend the words into a thought that is gratifying. If he feels that his conversational partners are willing to wait for him to get across some difficult explanation or narrative, he will continue, he will improve, he will succeed.

To better understand our own conversational relationships with our children, some parental detective work may be necessary. Mostly in terms of identifying, or being aware of our own attitudes. We might ask ourselves such questions as these: "Am I putting too much pressure on him to participate in conversation at times when he doesn't seem to want to talk at all? Am I shifting the subject or level of conversation too swiftly, too abruptly for him to keep up? Are my words too strange, my sentences too long and complex, my outpouring too rapid?"

Simple and sure, short and sweet, slow and easy—that's better. There is a lot to learn and there will be time. Speech will be good and it will blossom into conversation when the child feels the parents understand, or are trying; when he does not experience shame or anxiety about his rightful place in the family group; when he feels well the deep desire on the part of family members to converse with him sympathetically; when he senses their real interest in learning what he wants and needs to say. With such help he will not stumble along the conversational pathways—he will stride. Such is more likely to happen when the adults themselves, in their part of the conversational drama, feel free to share with the child their own thoughts and feelings. And all of this with love heartfelt.

But Is He Stuttering?

Hurdles will be scraped and knocked over and sometimes gone around. The pace of the speech journey will vary; nimble-tongued awhile, then falteringly, while here and there a rest period before resuming the climb toward speech maturity. The child will climb, for he needs to speak. He needs to command, to ask, to share, to participate. There will be stumblings. It is not an easy journey, and he has not been this way before. We must keep on with our earnest efforts to guide him on his way. Our speech explorer will hesitate and he will repeat. But we expect some hesitation and repeating in his speech attempts. This hill is high. But, with our help, when he gets to the top—what a view!

A child hesitates or repeats sounds and words for many good reasons. It will be helpful to keep a few of them in mind; otherwise, we may go astray by thinking that this particular speech behavior is unnatural; if we are not on guard, we may even label it "stuttering." Now we humans have a tricky habit of letting such names—or labels—regulate our behavior, especially our better judgement. A label stirs up all the meanings that we have previously attached to it, good or bad, and we are very likely to apply the same meaning to the newly-labelled thing. Some labels glow bright as beacons, blinding us to keener distinctions.

And they tend to focus on just a tiny piece of behavior, on the leaf rather than on the tree. So, we say this very seriously: Let's not leap, labels at the ready, onto the child's natural hesitations and repetitions. And let's not use other labels that may roll off our tongues too easily, also, like "slow speaker" and "lazy talker." We have seen the unfortunate results of labelling which comes too early, is applied too often, and in a way which makes the little one flustered about "being" whatever he has been labelled.

Now, why does he hesitate and repeat? Probably for reasons similar to why we ourselves do; he is emphasizing—"no, no, no—big big dog"; he is searching for a word that will do the job; he lacks information or is uncertain of what or how to speak, or of how he will be reacted to; he is fearful of saying a defiant word or a rebellious thought. Perhaps he is struggling to get a word in edgewise during a family debate; possibly he is trying to speak so rapidly that his normal speech coordination is tangled. Or maybe he simply has mixed feelings or is otherwise bewildered. There are some children who seem to repeat an action as a way of controlling or influencing the listener, of gaining sympathetic attention, for example; usually they do so unconsciously, although in a few cases they are fully aware of what they are up to. Our chief concern at this point should not center on *how* he is speaking, but rather on *why* he needs to speak as he does. By giving him attention at other times, can we cut down his tendency to speak repetitiously? Often, yes.

Repetitions and hesitations are seen in many kinds of behavior. How many mothers have sighed while mentioning that their child simply seems to do the same thing over and over again, apparently "with no real reason." He goes on banging the pan, pounding the piano, or slamming the cabinet door. We long for a magical turn-off switch. It is a game fully played by most children. The same act is echoed, the same sequence of movement is repeated. But then one recalls the earlier days when he would run down the hall and not be able to stop when he wanted to—he'd just keep running. For awhile, in many ways, it may be easier for him to keep on with an action than to stop; certainly it will be easier for him to keep on than to change to behavior more difficult of accomplishment, and so he may go on or repeating a word or phrase for awhile. Slowly the echoes will fade as he be-

comes more adept in altering his behavior, more capable in word usage and more certain of his conversational abilities.

Now, just one more thought on why a child may hesitate or repeat. Now and then we have seen children who, without realizing, repeat or hesitate to irritate or get back at a parent; they have learned somehow that this behavior upsets the parent and a four or five year old may be quite capable in wielding this verbal weapon. We will need to ask why. For while to react only to the action itself may be the immediate inclination, it is not the way to a solution of the problem, the way to understand why he does what he does. To learn why leads us to better ways of satisfying him—ways which, because rewarding, will lead to his giving up the less socially acceptable acts.

Again, in all such behavior, the variation among children will be considerable, and again, a single child will vary much from time to time, and from place to place. He will slip, he will slide, but he will get up again and move on if we are there interested, patient, hand and heart outstretched.

Sounding Off Freely

Freedom of speech. We believe in it and indeed we will fight for it in our society. Freedom in speaking—we need to believe in it and work hard to nurture it in our children. Many children who stutter feel that they cannot be completely spontaneous in their speech. Not nearly enough can they say what is on their minds as often or as freely as they would wish. We believe that one good way to increase the probability that a child will not stutter is to establish early a general pattern of spontaneity in speaking.

All the hopes we parents have for our children. Perhaps that little tyke will become a great actor or public speaker. Or a speaker people will really listen to anyway. Or some of us may think only occasionally of speech performance as such. Probably most of us would settle for speech which is courteous, gentle, civilized, honest with self and others, and socially effective. Such speech occurs in a child who is as self-confident and spontaneous

about talking as he is about walking. Such a child is well on his way to avoiding the problem of stuttering. For he feels deeply a freedom to speak, feels free to say what he wishes and needs to say. He is not reluctant to talk because of a feeling that speech will be dangerous—or because he fears that his listeners will react unfavorably. His speech takes wings—he is not shackled by over-sensitivity about the details of the speech act itself. For him, speaking is a natural and automatic way to express his uniqueness; its occasional frustrations are not crippling because of the overall pleasure and sometimes sheer joy that it brings. Most non-stuttering speech is characterized by spontaneity, by self-assurance regarding the basic act of speaking, and by freedom from excessive tension or fear. This is the least we should hope and work for in our children.

Speech spontaneous and joyful — how might we bring it about? Much depends on a child's overall feelings of self-confidence—on his total picture of himself and his place in our lives. And we have seen how very much his self-picture depends on how others regard him, react to him, accept his many ways of communicating—from the earliest days. As he attempts ever more difficult speech hurdles, he needs to be cheered on. His efforts, though unsuccessful here and there, must be more satisfying than frustrating. He must feel that he is understood. And when he is not understood, he must feel that at least we are trying to understand—this can be very helpful to him—our sincere trying. It will give him the confidence to go on, to leap higher hurdles. All the more so if we are especially tuned in to his *feelings*, not simply the words or facts he is expressing.

Spontaneous speech is possible when there are genuine feelings of self-assurance; when there are not too many mixed emotions within the child or the parent; when expression is not severely restricted—in child or in parent; where the sharing of thoughts and feelings is a free-flowing and joyful oneness between child and parent; when the child is not over-sensitive to the possibility of making errors in grammar, to the ways he makes sounds, or to the smoothness of his delivery. And there will be spontaneity if the child has feelings of confidence in expressing some basic emotion—not just anger or fear, but expressions of tenderness, of love, too.

Listening—Barrier or Gateway to Good Speech?

Pause for a moment in your reading. Close your eyes and listen; try to identify all the sounds you hear in the next minute or two.

Probably you will have heard sounds of which you were previously unaware. Your hearing mechanism was being stimulated, but you did not "hear"—in a conscious sense. To hear well requires a little extra effort—an attentive and focused kind of listening. Listening is an act we take for granted. We cannot do that. We must give our listening behavior some thought. For if a child is to speak well, he needs good listeners.

In our reasonable concern for our child's speech development, we must not focus all of our attention on *his mouth*; *our ears* are even more important. We are not stretching a point when we state that the most important part of children's learning to talk well relates to how well we, as adults, learn to listen. For children to speak well, we must listen well. We, too, have some learning to do.

Although we spend most of our lives with our ears at least half-cocked, listening is difficult to do objectively. A really good listener is as rare as the double breasted nuthatch. Since our children need better listeners than they usually possess, let us scan some of the ways in which most of us normally listen. The most common type is that in which the listener's ear is tuned only to the sound of the speaker's voice, to *how* he sounds rather than to *what* he is saying. It is as though we are listening to how a dog barks, or how a bird sings, or how the outboard engine sounds. This listening to tones does indeed provide some understanding. The mother scans the infant's cry to know if he is hungry, or if it is that bent safety pin again.

But the child may sense that the parent attaches an awful lot of importance to *how* he speaks—the accuracy of his speech sounds, the correctness of his pronunciation, the smoothness of his delivery. *What* he is saying—the thought, the feeling itself, the important things to him—seems far less significant to the parents. The child himself will begin to place the center of atten-

tion upon how he sounds. He may become cautious, hesitant, even fearful lest he speak inaccurately, incorrectly, unsmoothly. He will struggle to "sound right." It should not be necessary to struggle so at such a tender age. We want him to feel free to take a sufficient, comfortable amount of time to talk, to make mistakes, to think through and to reword as he is talking. We want him to believe that the listener indeed will listen, not only with the ears, but with the mind and heart as well. We want him to know that we are listening, not only to the shapes and the ease of flow of words, but more, to those important thoughts and feelings for which words are but servants. In order to communicate with people of any age, we must listen to more than the *how*. We must listen to the *what*. When a child tells you he has just cut his finger, he is doing much more than informing you of that fact. He is telling you that it hurts and that he is scared and wants help and reassurance. He is *sharing* via the spoken word, an experience with you. This is the kind of listening he wants. We are not at all sure that this is what he usually gets.

Too often we listen in an indifferent, detached kind of way until that to which we are half-heartedly listening stops; then we move on with whatever serves our own interests. The train whistle blows, and we wait until it stops blowing; the kettle whistles, and we interrupt our activity until the kettle is removed from the burner; a jet airliner roars overhead, and we pause 'til it passes. This is listening which amounts to little more than waiting. The sounds are regarded as "noises", intrusions. This kind of listening may be appropriate for train whistles, kettles, and jet aircraft, but it is hardly appropriate for children. And yet we often regard the child's chatter as annoying noise; we listen only enough to recognize when the chattering stops, so that we may get on with more important matters; perhaps in order to resume our own chatter.

After repeated experiences of this kind, what must a child think? "They're not interested in what I have to say. I want them to know what I just did, what I just thought. I want to let them know how I feel—it's so good (or so bad), but they don't want to know. They are not interested. Maybe I don't have anything interesting to say. Else why wouldn't they listen? Why keep trying to say things? Why try at all? Or maybe I can show

them—I'll not listen to them, either. But I'm confused. I want to talk—yet I don't want to talk. Oh, what to do?"

Or we interrupt. And if we interrupt repeatedly, the child will feel frustrated. He will feel that he has not been given his chance, not to mention the common courtesy he has seen his parents give other people. And he will be right, for to interrupt repeatedly is to be little more than a verbal bandit, a vulture swooping down to take charge of a conversation. In such a setting, how is a child's speech to unfold, to blossom fully?

There will be other times, especially with the very young, when the child speaks and we cannot understand what he says. A direct, interested eye contact while physically close, and a few well placed "uh huh's," "oh's," "well now's," and "that's what happens, eh's?", will go a long way to keep the speech flowing and eventually, you will come to understand. Sincere listening will lead to harvests.

Now to request that we be constantly good listeners to the vocal activities of our child is to ask for the impossible. Many young children, three to five year olders especially, chatter like magpies all day long. They often say the same things over and over again—an it often gets boring—very boring. And we can't escape their perpetual babblings, either, for the little ones are right under our feet. It is an unusual moment when mother is alone—no room's private to a young child. However, much of this talk will be private talk accompanying his play; usually it will not require a response.

Rather, we are thinking of those every-now-and-then moments when he comes to you, talks directly to you, asks in whatever way for a response from you, wants your listening attention. These moments may occur when mother is trying to finish the vacuuming or father is finally settling down with the newspaper after a tense ride home in slow traffic. But these will be the crucial moments; good listening will reap speech dividends. We ask only that some extra investment be made in this most important of interpersonal relationships—speaking and listening together. It is the stuff out of which better speech develops.

How You Listen Makes a Difference

This we believe—your child's most important listener is *you* —his parent. And so far as casting the die of stuttering or fluent speech is concerned, just about the most important thing you do as your child's listener occurs within your reactions to his hesitations and fumblings when he talks to you.

We may picture children's speech hesitations and repetitions as ranging along a wide line of variation with the beginning of the line representing very minor deviations—and the end of the line representing very severe deviations. If the line were a highway, a given child would be found to move up and down the highway at various points, times and distances. Any youngster's speech will so vary. But this speech highway is lined with spectators, as for a parade. For our purposes, the spectators are parents. Regardless of a child's position on the highway, there will be listening adults, some tuned to hear even the slightest deviation, regardless of where they stand along the route. A given parent may be at any point along the route; and he may hear; he may not. To carry the analogy farther, the parent himself may be riding up and down the highway—he, himself, will vary in his listening sensitivity.

Yes, there are many kinds of listeners, and each one varies in his own range of listening sensitivity. We are concerned particularly with those parents who are tuned in too sensitively for speech flaws. Listening of this kind leads to more and quicker reactions of a problem-encouraging kind. There are many ways of reacting. Some are helpful, some are not. Let's consider some of the ways.

It is best when you simply do not hear these speech flaws at all. We do not mean "forget them" in the sense of nonchalantly disregarding the general behavior of your child—no, of course not. But the fact is that you don't hear most of your child's speech imperfections. If you are like most of us, you hear none, or very few, of the repetitions and hesitations in your child's speech until he is about three years old. You may find it hard to believe that during the first year or two your offspring is, on the average, doing more hesitating and repeating than he is at three or so when you first may begin to notice that he is doing such a thing.

Some careful research shows that most children repeat and hesitate in speaking more often when they are two than they do at two and one-half, and more often at two and one-half than at three. The time you think *he begins* may in fact be but the time *you begin* to pay attention to the breaks and repetitions.

During the first two or three years, then, your youngster is feeling his way in trying to master the fine and fateful art of speaking. He is exploring, experimenting, trying, learning. As he does so, he stumbles and picks himself up, as it were, over and over and over again. It is his good fortune that you pay no attention to his his his uh his fumblings for words he has not yet learned or become sure of and his cah- cah- conflicts over whether to speak, and if so, what to say and how uh huh- how to say it. Since you pay no attention to these trials and errors, he doesn't either. He takes them for granted and he takes them in stride and they are simply a natural part of the always wonderful and sometimes exciting adventure of controlling others at a distance by saying things to them. Now, perhaps one day you do begin to notice that your youngster does not always speak smoothly. It will make a great deal of difference to him whether you do this matter-of-factly or excitedly, with acceptance or disapproval, with calm confidence in your child's basic capacity for growth and development, or with disturbed concern over the possibility that there is "something wrong or abnormal" about what he is doing and even about his physical body, or, perhaps, his basic personality.

Parents, Parents, Parents

We don't have to be psychologists to see that no two parents are alike. Like children, they vary, not only in height, weight, and shoe-size but, more importantly, in attitudes, feelings, and in ways of reacting. But within some groups, certain similarities can be observed. To make our discussion simpler, we may find it helpful to think of parents as being of one of four basic kinds. You may want to decide which kind you are or have been or which kind you would most like to be.

First, there is the parent who seems never to notice — not even to hear at all — the repetitions and other hesitations in

his child's speech. And so, of course, he has no unusual feelings. about them and he doesn't react to them. And, as we mentioned, this is usually all to the good; the younger the child, the more this is true. Better to let him build up his speech underpinnings than to cause him, by our wrinkled brow or lipbiting, to doubt his own ability.

Second, there is the parent who does notice these things, usually when the child is around three years of age. But this parent takes for granted that all children do such things, just as all children fall down now and then in learning to walk. And so he thinks nothing of the hesitations and does nothing about them because to him they seem perfectly normal. Such a parent may say, if you ask him, that he thinks all children stutter, at least sometimes. Or, he may say that very few children do, or that he doesn't know. Whatever the word "stutter" means to him, and whether or not he uses it to refer to what his own child does, it just never occurs to him to think that his child is speaking in a way that is unusual, peculiar, or alarming. He does not make a special issue of speech.

Third, there is the parent who not only begins to notice fumblings and breaks in fluency, but is also for a time a little puzzled and more or less concerned about them. Not having noticed them before, he thinks the child has just started to be hesitant in speaking and he asks himself why. But it is not a "panicky or troubled" why. It represents more curiosity than worry, although it can reflect moments of genuine concern. Within a few days or weeks, however, the parent comes gradually to the conviction that there is nothing significantly wrong with the child or with the way he is speaking. If, say five years later, you were to ask the parent whether his child had ever stuttered, he would be likely to give one of two answers (unless he had completely forgotten about the matter). Either he would say, "Yes, he did, he went through a phase of stuttering for a few weeks, but it passed and that's all there was to it," or he would reply, "Well, it's hard to say—I think he may have stuttered for awhile, at least we wondered whether he was going to, but before we got around to doing anything about it somehow it all just sort of evaporated." Here again, speech was not emphasized out of proportion to its actual nature.

Finally, there is the parent whom we are most likely to see at our speech clinics. This is the parent who begins one day to pay attention to the repeating and hesitating his child is doing in speaking and who has reasons for worrying about what he thinks he is observing. What are these reasons? One of them can be lack of information, or misinformation, about the way children speak and about the way speech develops and the conditions that are effective one way and another. Many people grow up in our society and go through school and college—and even achieve various kinds of advanced degrees—and become parents without ever having picked up along the way very much dependable information about the physical, emotional, semantic, and social processes of speech and language development and the conditions that affect them during early infancy and early childhood or later. The only basis they have for judging a child's speech is their own speech. This means that since such a parent is an adult, he judges the speech of his child only by adult standards. If he is inclined to make a judgement about his child's speech he is likely, therefore, to be disturbed by what he hears.

Moreover, the parent is likely to have made no such judgement until the child reaches the age of about 3 years. Why? Well, probably up to this time he has been interested primarily in other things that the child has been doing which did indicate that he was learning to talk. That is, he has had ears and eyes only for the new word, the new phrase, the first use of "I" instead of "me," the first correct pronunciation of a name previously scuttled, the first time the child greeted the mailman, the first time he answered the ringing telephone. What has mattered to the parent was that the child was learning to speak and little else about the child's way of speaking gained the parent's attention.

As the weeks became months, the youngster acquired so many words that the parent found it more and more difficult to be sure whether any one of them was a new word that the child had never used before. Finally, no sentence seemed longer than any the child had uttered previously. The problem now had become that of getting to the telephone before the sticky little fingers did. Our budding conversationalist by now had been talking daily for several weeks to the mailman—and to the meter

reader, the laundry man, and anyone and everyone else who moved through his small but gradually expanding world. Besides, he was now at the age of three or so—asking what seemed like hundreds of questions a day!

From Ear to Mouth

It is then that something very important can happen. The parent may begin to shift his attention—without quite realizing when, or how, or why. He takes notice of what *kind* of speaker the little one has become. He listens more intently to the sort of speaking the child is doing. It is usually at this point that the parent begins to hear the repeating and hesitating. The repetitions and hesitations had always been there. But the parent had not noticed them. So he assumes that the child has just begun to speak this way. It is "new," it is unexpected, it is unusual; and, sometimes, with only adult standards to go by, he judges this speech to be abnormal.

Now, anything unusual, abnormal, and probably important is to be called something. The human clan likes to "fix" a thing by giving it a label. The name that probably comes to mind for our parent in search of a name is "stuttering." By giving this name to what is being noticed in the child's speech the parent increases his interest in them and heightens the attention he pays to them. Before, he was noticing few or none of them. Now he tends to hear most or even all of his youngster's hesitations. Since he classifies them as stuttering he can only conclude, with deepening concern, that the child is doing a great deal of stuttering, and that he is getting worse. For the average three year-old not only repeats or hesitates in some other way as many as fifty to one hundred times every thousand words, but he says so very many thousands of words each day, that he can seem, to an ear tuned for trouble, to be "having a great deal of trouble" indeed—and for the parent who calls this "trouble" stuttering, he can seem to be "stuttering severely."

None of this would be very important were it not for the fact that any loving and conscientious parent does not remain indifferent to a child "in trouble." Parents who find themselves

in this situation react differently, of course. Some make strong and unmistakable reactions. Others try mightily not to show their feelings. Most parents fall somewhere between these extremes. They show their feelings, especially in bodily postures, facial expressions, and tones of voice but few of them say anything to the child about their concern over his speech, and not often does the word "stuttering" itself pass from parent to child. But it is difficult for the parent not to communicate his feelings to the child, and when his feelings are strong it is impossible. So it is that the child comes to know the parent's feelings and to adopt them as his own. He may do this gradually, in some cases quickly, and when he does he speaks with new feelings. He speaks, that is, with concern about the way he speaks. This means he speaks with more—and a new kind of—hesitating or repeating. He not only hesitates—this he has always done—but now he is afraid lest his hesitations or repetitions be misunderstood—lest *he* be misunderstood. He is speaking now not only with his long-practiced doubts about whether to speak and what to say, but also with a new doubt—about whether he will be able to speak at all.

And so now the child is caught up in the *problem* called stuttering. It was a problem for his parents before it was for him, but now it is his, too. They are in the problem together. Each reacts to the reaction of the other. Speech is like that. It is both action and reaction, it is both listening and speaking, it is both stimulus and response. And the problem called stuttering is, therefore, a problem of and for both the speaker and those who listen and speak to him. This means that it is a problem for both parent and child. It is for both of them, therefore, that it is to be prevented—but, of necessity, it is to be prevented *by* the parent rather than the child. The problem becomes increasingly the speaker's to deal with as time goes on, but it will remain also a problem for the parent.

Your Child's Reaction to His Speech Hesitations —and to Your Reactions to Them

Hardly ever will your child seem to be the least bit aware of the hesitating and repeating he does in speaking, for to him that is just the way speaking goes. There may be times, however,

when he will appear to be bothered, though usually slightly and only a fleeting moment. He will be bothered now and then as you would be if you were learning a new language—as he is doing, of course. He may try to tell you, for example, that he had just seen his first firefly and he uh uh uh uh he won't know what to call it. He may keep up for a long while his uh his uh effort to think of uh nuh nuh name for it, and he may eventually become annoyed and stamp his feet and even burst into tears—if he is tired enough, or lonely enough, or irritated enough by your failure or refusal to tell him the name he needs, or by his own sense of frustration with himself.

He will be bothered in such activities as guessing games or word games if he "loses" too often because he cannot think of the answers or the specific words to say in order to "win." If he makes mistakes in reciting for a neighbor or in saying his lines in a program at school or in speaking while visiting relatives he might feel flustered or embarrassed, especially if you seem embarassed or disappointed; that is the key factor: how you react to him—it spells the difference.

If you feel that such experiences are, in fact, distressful, you would want to be especially careful in arranging matters so that your youngster need not be subjected to "performing for company," speaking publicly before strange audiences, or in formal ceremonies or in an unfamiliar language, or in any situation in which he will feel defeated if he makes a mistake. One or more really upsetting experiences of this sort can affect a child for a very long time and make it less likely that he will ever feel at ease in talking to important strangers or in addressing audiences, reporting in classes, conducting meetings and the like. Indeed, a seriously embarrassing speaking experience can leave a child with the beginnings of a kind of doubt and concern about speaking out of which the problem of stuttering grows.

An adult forgets. He forgets about his own efforts and frustrations in learning to speak; he forgets the difficulty in speaking he had as a child after rushing in to tell his mother that Jimmy had pushed him off his wagon; he forgets those moments of confusion he experienced while trying to think of the name of that horse with the stripes that he saw at the zoo—or in trying to say that silly tongue-twister that Dad and his friends

laughed at so much. And an adult tends to forget stressful situations in speaking he has had as an adult; trying to pronounce those foreign words in the high school French class; his first fumbling tongue-tripping in the public speaking class; his boggled introductions at the last social; the speech almost forgotten at the initiation ceremony; all accompanied by some doubts, some tension, even a bit of fear and frustration, not to mention those self-criticisms which followed the reactions to the bungled venture. We should not forget to remember.

You can do—indeed, you can scarcely avoid—doing much to determine how your child will react to his "mistakes" and fumblings and frustrations in speaking. If you praise him and are pleased only when he speaks very smoothly and without making "mistakes," it is to be expected that, because your approval of him means more to him than anything else in the world, he will come to attach undue importance to whether or not he makes mistakes in talking. He will be bothered by them. They will cause him to feel embarrassed and even unworthy. He may become quite unsure of himself in speaking at certain times and places or to certain people because of his dread of the mistakes he might make. And he may tense up in trying not to make mistakes at all. The effect will be even greater, of course, if you positively and obviously disapprove of his imperfections in speech and seem to be distressed or disappointed by them.

If, on the other hand, you accept with pleasure and warmth —and not with matter-of-factness—the speaking your child does, "mistakes" and hesitations and all, then he will take his cue from you. He will feel the same satisfaction with his speech as you do. He will feel free to go ahead and make "mistakes" because they will not be taken seriously and no issue will be made of them by you—and so he will make no issue of them either. He will find speaking pleasant and rewarding, "mistakes" or no "mistakes," hesitations or no hesitations.

You may ask whether it might not be possible for your child to repeat and hesitate so often, or so severely, that he will himself be distressed even though you may not be. If your child ever does an unusual kind or amount of hesitating, repeating, or blocking it is all the more important that you set for him the

best possible example by reacting to his unusual speech pattern in a helpful way. You can best take for granted that your child will not do anything out of the ordinary for no reason. The most constructive thing you can do is to take your attention off the child's unusual repeating and hesitating long enough to look about for any possible reasons he might have for doing these things. If his speech interruption is unusual you are likely to find unusual reasons why. He may be unusually excited, or afraid, or discouraged, or bewildered, or ashamed or unsettled by something someone has said or done. He may be unusually tired. Or he may be speaking under unusual pressure to do well, or to respond quickly or without preparation (as when in the midst of a long-distance call he is asked to "say something to Grandmommy"). He may be trying to read aloud a lesson he has not studied, or to recite a verse he has not quite memorized, or to answer a riddle he cannot quite recall. He may be trying to squeeze in a word during an unusually loud and lively family discussion. Maybe the family has just moved into a new house in a new neighborhood and you have urged him to go and talk with three strange children who seem to him unfriendly and menacing.

It could also be that he has just discovered that you are bothered by his hesitating and he is trying not to do it anymore —he doesn't know how not to and so and so and so and s- s- so, he is doing whatever he is doing as a consequence. Possibly he is simply playing with his "sound-making machine" do do do doing su- su- su- su- such things because he has found out that he can and he finds them, for awhile, fascinating. There may be other reasons, too. Whatever they may be, the most constructive thing to do is to try to determine what they are and to do what you can to eliminate them if they seem harmful. Meanwhile, it is of basic importance that the child be assisted to take his unusual speech interruption in stride and experience no undue distress in association with it. If you judge what he is doing as "abnormal" or as "stuttering," you are likely to find it most difficult or impossible to keep your concern from showing and from being felt by the youngster. And if he "catches from you" feelings of anxiety about his ability to speak satisfactorily, he will react with some degree of doubt and concern in speaking. This can lead, if improperly met by you, to a stuttering problem.

What your child is doing may best be viewed as "normal under the circumstances." By viewing it so, you will be moved to direct your attention to circumstances and to ways of changing them for the better. This is the best reaction you can make. The basic point to remember is this: your child, like any other youngster, is going to talk with some amount of hesitation and repetition, sometimes very little, sometimes a moderate amount, and now and then an unusual amount. Usually he will seem utterly unaware of it and once in awhile he may be bothered by it. What matters most of all is what you make of it and how you react to it, whether he does little or much of it, and whether or not he seems to know he is doing it.

We want to stress that these suggestions hold true also for the child who suddenly, rather than gradually, begins to show marked stoppages or volleys of repetition in his speech. Sometimes a child will seem "frozen" or "stuck" in his speaking: there is a damming or blocking of the sound. He can't move on. Total body posture may become fixed. This can be a passing thing—it may discomfort him very little. But if it frustrates him, it can be a problem. These sudden increases in hesitant speech seem more likely to induce anxiety on the part of the parent, or perhaps, even some struggling on the part of the child. Again, let us state that the appropriate behavior here is to react with understanding and acceptance, and to do what you can to ease the pressures which probably are provoking the burst of broken speech.

Finally, all of this is to be viewed in relation to the way you and your child feel about each other in all the important ways we have been considering. If your child is not dead certain that you care about him more than you care about anything else in the whole world, he will be more affected by your disapproval of his speech hesitations—or anything else he does. Given enough basic insecurity, your child will be upset by even your faintest frown and distressed by even his own slightest shortcoming. Given sufficiently deep feelings of security, your child can take even your blanket disapproval without serious consequences and he can enjoy the freedom to make, and to learn from, whatever mistakes he may make in speaking, as well as in any other aspect of his behavior.

Feelings That Cut

The days and nights of bringing up children are not without trouble. Alongside the laughter and sharing are those moments when family relationships are a bit stormy, when unpleasant feelings run high. Unusual is the family which does not find itself, now and then, sailing in rough waters emotionally. It takes a few skills of parental navigation to ride out the tempest.

Certain feelings cut deeply. This we know from our own experience. If we are fearful, hurt, embarrassed or depressed, we feel it to the very marrow of our bones. At such times speaking fluency is likely to be hurt, also — sometimes greatly. In the young and developing child such feelings are even more likely to cause distress.

Children, like adults, will handle such feelings differently. And what eventually happens will depend on whether or not such feelings are "sometime" things—or are experienced more or less regularly. If painful feelings are felt constantly, problems develop. Some sorrow, some fearfulness, some pain and embarrassment go into the fabric of everyone's existence. In most instances they do not lead to serious, prolonged difficulty. But where a problem does exist, deep hurts will intensify it. Where a problem does not exist, such feelings increase the chance of one developing. Feelings that hurt and that happen often may interfere with normal speech development. And among such feelings, fears and anxieties stand out. We find that such feelings are not uncommon among children who stutter.

Fears may be plainly noticeable: dogs, the dark, being left alone. Or they may be more difficult to identify: a vague feeling of discomfort or signs of worry or oversensitiveness may be the chief clues. Perhaps it is the fear of one's self—a feeling of inadequacy, of objects or situations too difficult to master, of one's own inability. Unreal as the child's fears sometimes may seem to adults, to him they are very real indeed. To ridicule a child about his fears certainly is unwise. And to judge the fears simply from the viewpoint of adult logic will not prove helpful either. He is not an adult. It would be far better for the adults to try to take a child's viewpoint, and even to try to recall their own childhood fears. Perhaps we have forgotten that we, too, were

afraid and needed help. For to fear is to suffer, to be pained. Some soothing will be called for. Chances to talk out the fears or feelings will be needed. Affection aplenty and some extra portion of physical closeness will help to restore the balance.

Shame or embarrassment may be thought of in a similar way. Even as adults, a situation which shames or embarrasses us strikes deeply. But, as adults, we have more resources for handling such feelings. We can maneuver. We can explain. We can leave the situation. We make our embarrassing moments brief because they are so hard to bear. The child is not as capable. He feels ill-at-ease, self-conscious. Shame leads him to magnify things out of proportion; it tends to paralyze action, interfering with forward movement and adjustment. He will need to learn that mistakes do happen and that perfection is not always possible, that all of us have feelings that are not, every moment, sweet and loving. He must be given chances to learn that he can talk out his feelings with us, to air the poisonous stuff. And he will learn best from his most important teachers, his parents. In the closeness of their warm relationships, the hurt will heal and the bedrock of speech development will not be shaken.

Speech changes with mood. If sadness and dejection are felt too deeply and for too long the child's behavior will suffer. His speech may suffer. The child who is dejected too often over too long a period of time probably is not only "moody," but timid, nervous, and self-conscious as well. He may have a sense of inferiority; he may be perfectionistic. He may feel that he just doesn't measure up to what he expects his parents or others want him to be; he may feel guilty. Self-confidence will crack. The signpost of such feelings sometimes will be seen in speech behavior—for example, fluency and general spontaneity may become obstructed. We are not here thinking of isolated instances —that time he couldn't have his cousin's toy. All children experience such moments. They can learn from them; learn tolerance, learn patience, learn sharing, learn the realities and responsibilities of becoming older. But if feeling hurt and depressed continues to the point where the child withdraws from social contacts, speaks less and less, or loses the spontaneity and confidence that he had, then some family pulling-together is called for. The child will need to be comforted, supported, encouraged

to talk of his feelings, assisted in expressing his emotions in a variety of ways. We will have to make definite efforts to improve confidence, stress his strong points, impress him with our sincere interest and appreciation regarding his behavior. Most of all, we must strengthen him with our full love of him.

Relationships That Matter

It is primarily through speech that we relate to others. Speech problems, then, interfere with such relationships. The opposite is true, also. Conflicts in relationships interfere with speech development and fluency. So much so, in fact, that stuttering may be defined as a problem in interpersonal relationships. Fractured relationships can lead to stuttering, while stuttering can interfere with successful relationships. How important it is, then, to build a network of warm, close, satisfying bonds between child and parent. Most of us are aware of how our own speech varies according to who is listening. We feel more comfortable with some, far less with others. A child is not very different, except, of course, that he has not had the vast amount of speaking experience we have had and is, therefore, more probably going to have a harder time making a successful speech adjustment. He may hesitate, try again, and stumble a bit before gaining his footing. He will need help, patience, and encouragement. He will need a good relationship with his parents.

For these reasons, as we have been stressing throughout this booklet, a clear awareness of the kinds of relationships existing within the family circle is very desirable. For it is out of these relationships that speech fluent and satisfying, or broken and frustrating, emerges. A child may be silent and at a standstill when the other children are around, but loud and active when they are not. He may be reserved or hesitant when Dad's at home, but spontaneously talkative when alone with Mother during the day. The opposite may be the case. Or the child may change his vocal behavior from time to time, place to place. Always, however, the nature of his behavior seems to hinge pretty squarely on the kinds of relationships he has or senses with those around him. Quite a few times, in clinical work, we find that a

few sessions of talking things over with parents in terms of relationships is helpful to the child's ongoing speech development. The child himself, in such instances, may not even have been seen at all. But the slight change made by the parents—a change in attitude, a little shift in terms of ways of reacting to the child, perhaps—can be enough to settle simple areas of doubt and confusion. Maybe the child simply needs to blow off a little steam. All of us have a little bit of the gangster in us. Letting it out is far better than keeping it in. Perhaps he needs the feeling of being wanted and loved in spite of his floundering.

There seems to be a tendency among some parents of stuttering children to have a pretty high level of expectation concerning their children's general or speech behavior. Perhaps we are a little too demanding or expect too much in terms of eating habits, neatness, punctuality, cooperation, or speaking ability. At its worst, high expectations may involve criticism, disapproval or "being tough" with the child. At its mildest, it could mean an occasional comment as to how he might do better, or the reaction of showing a more desirable way — through parental example. It is possible to expect a reasonably high level of performance a large part of the time and still have the child feel loved and accepted. But it is also possible to cause a child some tension of a disruptive kind by consistently expecting a little too much a little too often. Some authorities say that the ways in which we go about the business of toilet training, teaching the child how to dress, eat properly, go to bed, and so forth have a lot to do with a child's feelings about himself and about his family. In such activities, speaking plays a big part. Repeated conflicts and frustrations can interfere with fluency. Often, in our clinical work with children who stutter, we are impressed with signs of family pressure on the child toward intellectual and verbal achievement. Sometimes, for instance, we find that it is almost impossible to schedule a child for therapy because his life is already filled with additional activities beyond school. His afternoons and Saturdays are crammed with music lessons, language studies, and other regularly scheduled pursuits. Such a situation smacks of demands which are excessive. In such cases, the parents will want to ask: "What are we doing? Why are we doing it? Does it make sense? Whose needs are being satisfied?"

Parents of today are in a difficult position: they have to chose between a house for adults—one that will make a "good impression," and a house for children—one that will make "a good place in which to grow." It is not an easy choice. This question is a reasonable one to ask: "Who am I trying to please? —my neighbors? my relatives? myself?—my own need to have a spotless house with spotless, perfectly mannered children? Or my own family, my children?" That Louis XIV furniture may have to wait until the little ones aren't little any longer. Who am I trying to please? If our little tyke is not doing some things as early or as well as his neighbor-playmates, we'll have to try to realize that it's not because we're "poor parents." Children differ, and no doubt our boy is ahead in other respects, and will catch up in others. He will need time, encouragement, acceptance, patience. Were he to voice his sentiments, he might say, "Love me as I am!"

Often, and this may be most important of all, it may be necessary to take a closer look at the relationship between the parents themselves. The harmony of the two people who have developed the family is the keystone. Were they to look at themselves, they might ask such questions as these: "Do we talk things over when there is a difference of opinion? Do we listen? Are we affectionate to each other? Responsive? Do we say nice things to each other? Are we consistent with each other? Do we recognize that each of us has moments when anger needs to be expressed?"

We parents sometimes are very hard on ourselves. We must always be mild mannered, always tell the truth, never have a weakness — or at any rate never admit it, never talk about our strengths, always be "together" and always strive to be perfect parents and lovers. When, therefore, we sound off, tell a fib, get off by ourselves for awhile, think of the things we don't do well, or happen to mention something that we are, by golly, very good at, we feel guilty. The point is that the attitudes and relationships of the parents set the pattern for the relationships between parent and child. Often, then, to better appreciate the nature of our interaction with the child, we need to better understand the relationship between husband and wife. Each of us has his quirks, his peculiar likes and dislikes, his private opinions, his personal

sensitivities. Some things we do well, others we do not. We bungle. We are kind. We flare up. We become silent. All the while, in each of us, there is a little of what we see in others. Let us admit it and go on from there. Someone has said "Children need models more than they need critics." What kinds of models are we?

There will be times when we are not consistent. This is no great danger as long as we are basically consistent in giving responses which are appropriate and which are sensitive to the feelings being experienced. Most of the time the child should be able to count on the general kind of response you are likely to give in various situations. He will need the security of knowing that, when certain things happen, certain things tend to follow. But there will be some inconsistencies—it is human. There will be times when we will need to vent our own emotional acids. Vent if we must. But let us talk things over when the boiling waters have cooled down. Let's ask what is happening and why. If we can admit such feelings within ourselves, and deal with them openly, then we will be inclined to accept the feelings of a child and to deal with them together, and openly. In such an atmosphere speech will bloom, will be free in spirit, will be satisfying, will flow smoothly and with strength.

Influences of Other Kinds

The child's speech is a family affair. Family harmony means clear sailing for the child in his speech efforts, but family disruptions rock the boat. To get the child's speech back on an even keel it may be necessary for the family to take a look at itself, not simply at the child's speech stumblings. If a child begins to repeat, to hesitate, or to block in his speaking, to an excessive degree, some extra family detective work may be in order. What's happened recently that might have caused the change in speech behavior? Is there a new baby in the house? Has our child lost the spotlight of family attention? Can we offset a bit our natural tendency to shower our love and praise on the new arrival? It is hard for a young child to have the whole pie, then find that he must share it.

Or have nervous tensions been building up between the par-

ents? Too many sharp words, angry words, or words hastily spoken serve as poor models for the child learning to speak. If this is the way one gains attention, expresses emotion, or gets one's own way, then the child comes to learn the same methods for the same purposes. But the adult way of speaking (their vastly larger vocabulary, their rapid pace) is beyond the child's grasp. And this, coupled with the tensions and anxieties which darken the situation, can break up or hold back ongoing speech development.

Perhaps the child has been caught in a cross-fire of conflicts between the parents about important matters concerning the child's conduct. He is confused by conflicting demands or lack of direction. His speech reflects such conflicts and, indeed, he may at such times lose his way. The parents will need to talk things over, to reflect a little, heart to heart. They will need to stand together if the child is to walk alone.

Of course, very sudden changes may throw a child off stride. Especially if he has already shown a tendency to reveal his stresses through his speech. Moving to a different neighborhood is one example: lack of familiarity with surroundings and the necessity of talking with strangers may produce speech shyness or hesitancy. At such times your helpful explanations, your laughter and sharing of pleasures, your full moments of silence shared together, will mean much.

Naturally, the change brought about by a breaking up of the family, for whatever reason, may well be revealed in another kind of disruption—that within the speech behavior of the child. A partial break-up of other kinds may have similar consequences; for instance, a parent deeply preoccupied with his work to the point where little time or thought is given to the child. Such withdrawal of attention may lead to feelings of loneliness, of being rejected, or resentment. And these feelings can result in speech break-ups, especially when the child is in the presence of the offending parent. It is not that the parent is "evil." On the contrary. The parent no doubt is "good" in countless ways—but perhaps he has forgotten temporarily that the child has a mighty thirst for parental closeness and love. It will be time to remember.

However, there are some instances in which the child truly

is fearful of the listener. And we do know that feelings of fear have a disruptive effect upon the speaking ability of persons in general—and children in particular. This may be especially the case in a child who does a lot of hesitating and blocking. Some infants, in a state of sudden, intense dread or anger, experience a stoppage of breathing, the child becoming "blue in the face" due to lack of oxygen, choking, unable to utter a sound. This is unusual, especially in children three or four years of age or older, but does give us an idea, though a frightening one, of how intense fear can hamper normal functioning. In older children, the effects are shown more in a hesitation or wavering in speaking. Fear inhibits speech production and development; perhaps the child feels that something he'd like to say may be objectionable to the adult, lead to rejection, disapproval, or even punishment. Frequent stern disapprovals in the past may contribute to his fear in the present. Guilt, shame and the expectancy of punishment may intensify the experience. If, under such stress, the child is made to "confess," for example, he may speak in a way which is similar to stuttering, though it usually will be of a temporary nature. Such situations call for wise caution by the adult. Unusual pressure or a stern disciplinarian attitude with a child already having some difficulty in speaking may only magnify his struggling.

Some strong fears are due to specific events, such as being locked accidentally in a room, getting lost, or similar alarming experiences. Deep frights of this kind can upset speaking ability, though usually for but short periods of time. And in other periods of upset, such as those sometimes accompanying illnesses, especially prolonged and serious ones, effects on speech may be observable. Obviously, here the parent will serve as the vital wellspring of comfort; the child will need to drink deeply; he may need to talk much of his experience. We parents will want to listen long. Fears expressed take wing and disappear; fears not spoken become heavy anchors. We will do what we know we must do—all that we can do.

Many children go through such stresses as those we have been discussing without ever reaching a speech breaking point. Other children are much more sensitive. As always, children differ greatly. And a given child will vary in his sensitivity to stress situations. On this basis, it could be said that some children are

more disposed toward fluency than others. Still, the disposition, in either direction, seems very closely related to parental attitudes and family situations. These are the soil out of which spring fear and hesitancy, or courage and confidence.

Special note might be taken of those children who have a speech disorder of another kind, in some cases due to a physical handicap. Children with cleft palate or cerebral palsy find it more difficult to produce correctly the sounds we use in speaking. Children mentally slow experience more difficulty in learning to use language. Hearing handicapped children tend to have difficulty in speaking. Such problems can and often do lead to frustration in oral communication; the child cannot always speak as clearly, as fluently. He cannot always be understood. Embarrassment, tension, and the other feelings we have mentioned can develop. The kinds of considerations and suggestions we have been discussing would be even more applicable with these children.

Another worry of some parents is revealed in this question: "Was I wrong in insisting that my child stop using his left hand and begin using his right?" True, left-handedness and stuttering quite often occur together, but most specialists agree that changing handedness is not a direct cause of stuttering. Of course, anything in the child's discipline that has the effect of making him feel different or that he is not quite what the parents "want me to be" may put him at a disadvantage in speaking situations. If parents constantly make an issue of the child's left-handedness, anxieties are produced that may interfere with the calmness and relaxation necessary to fluency in speech. Such are the possible indirect connections between stuttering and left-handedness. So, as a final statement, we would say this: it is probably not wise for parents to interfere with the natural handedness of the child, but to do so does not directly cause stuttering.

One more consideration: sometimes parents stutter. In their households, a likelihood exists that more attention will be paid to speech behavior, especially any signs of stuttering speech. Natural speech hesitancies may more easily be thought of as a problem. This tendency should be avoided. Sometimes parents who stutter fear that their children will learn to do so through imitation. But there is no evidence that stuttering is caused by

imitation. If it were, we would expect children to stutter in the same pattern, and they do not.

At the same time, it is recognized that a child in such a family might develop the kinds of struggling and associated feelings which could be termed stuttering. This sometimes causes the parent to feel guilty—to feel that the child's speech difficulties are the result of his own problem. We offer this reassurance. Do not feel that your child has to suffer simply because you yourself have this problem. Do not feel that if it does occur it has been "passed on" directly from you. Actually, you might even have some advantage over non-stuttering parents. The parent who stutters may even help to reassure the child about interruptions in his own speech by showing him that adults do not always speak perfectly. If you can demonstrate to the child easy ways of being non-fluent; if you can show that stuttering can be done without self-consciousness, then perhaps your child will never develop those fears or hesitations which lead to stuttering. We repeat: the speech model provided by the parent who stutters need not cause undesirable speech development in the child, especially if the stuttering is done in a relaxed fashion and without self-consciousness. Literally millions of mothers and fathers who stutter have had children who never came to experience stuttering. More important than stuttering speech are the attitudes, feelings, and reactions of the parent, and the goodness of the total relationship between parent and child. What is the important ingredient for the child? Not the parental word brokently uttered—but the treasure seen as he looks into the depths of loving eyes.

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PART II

Some Questions Parents Ask

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What Is Stuttering?

The dictionary and the public would describe stuttering as "hesitating or stumbling in uttering words," but to the specialist this definition is incomplete. Stutterers do not usually have discernible physical or mental abnormalities, are likely to experience fears or anxieties in relation to their speaking, are aware that their way of talking is considered unusual, and probably show signs of struggle in their attempts to produce trouble-free speech (see pages 11-13).

What Causes Stuttering?

Authorities do not agree on one specific cause of stuttering. But, speaking generally, stuttering appears to be related closely to difficulties or stresses in interpersonal relationships.

Can Stuttering Be Prevented?

With our present knowledge of the disorder, we can hope, and we can act in ways that will do much to prevent stuttering —this is clear. But we cannot state with absolute certainty that most stuttering can be avoided. If we can assume a favorable climate of mental health, affectionate parent-child relationships, and some parental understanding of how reasonably fluent speech can be encouraged, the chances of stuttering developing are very slim, indeed. However, we know of no crystal-clear way which completely insurmountable barriers to the development of stuttering can be erected. Even if all the policies recommended in this booklet are met, the possibility exists that some stuttering behavior could develop. In such cases, consultation with a qualified professional person is absolutely necessary (see page 58). However, important preventive measures can and should be taken long before such consultation might be indicated.

What Can Be Done To Prevent Stuttering?

The entire contents of this booklet are devoted to answering this question. But, in brief, let us say this: a great deal can be done. Even from the infant's first year of life in this talkative world, the seeds of fluent speech can be sown. If the parents can accomplish the following goals, they will have gone far toward insuring speech fluency in their child:

1) Become as sensitive as possible to the infant's many ways of communicating with us—verbally and non-verbally;

2) Tune in more to the *feelings* being expressed, rather than to the fact or intellectual content spoken—*how* one speaks is very often much more crucial than *what* one speaks;

3) Learn what it takes for normal speech to develop—learn the ways of giving a helping hand, and make definite efforts to guide your child's speech development;

4) Provide good models of speaking for your child—you are his first and most important teacher;

5) Learn how to listen, and how not to listen—yes, it takes some doing to know how to listen well;

6) Make your expectations concerning your child's speech and other behavior reasonable—try not to expect too much too soon;

7) Make certain there are plenty of opportunities for feelings to get out into the open—especially the distasteful feelings—not only your child's, but your own as well—then work at figuring out why they built up and what you can do to improve the situation;

8) Encourage speech spontaneity in your child by strengthening his self-confidence and his desire to share his world with you—as you share yours with him;

9) Be a good conversational partner for your child—too often our conversational traffic-patterns are one-way streets—or dead ends;

10) Keep family relationships as harmonious as possible—especially those between husband and wife for they set the pace and provide the key to successful speech growth.

Each of these points is considered in detail in this booklet. The very process of reaching, itself, for these goals will improve the possibility of your child's growing up to speak normally.

What are the Signs of Beginning Stuttering?

It is vitally important that parents recognize the difference between beginning stuttering and the normal hesitancies which all children show occasionally (see pages 27-29; 35-43) even though practical steps to be taken are very much the same in both instances. The following kinds of behavior deserve a calm concern; it should be noted that these behaviors may happen suddenly or develop gradually:

1) The child begins to show marked and obvious speech hesitancies;

2) He begins to avoid verbal contacts or becomes excessively shy about speaking in certain situations which he had formerly entered eagerly. The same holds true when this reluctance to speak involves a certain person;

3) He begins to speak with effort and strain, and is clearly struggling to express things which previously he had said easily;

4) Volleys of repetition of syllables or sounds, or the drawing out of sounds, begin to reappear more often.

Through appropriate methods, such as those described in this booklet and used by an understanding parent, such behaviors can be modified and the stuttering may fade away. This has happened many times.

Should Some Speech Hesitancies be of More Concern to Us Than Others?

Yes. It is not always simple to make the distinction but there are some guide lines. If, when broken speech occurs, the child appears helpless and seems unable to go on speaking, we have reason for some concern. The child may react to his state of helplessness by quickly stopping, by backing up and trying to begin again, or by struggling. In such cases, the listener, too, seems to judge these very different kinds of hesitant behavior as something unusual, not at all like the simple pause or moment of indecision all persons experience; he is likely to view them as, indeed, a struggle to overcome some sort of stumblingblock.

Also, this sort of repetitiousness is not haphazard; rather, it tends to occur with some consistency—perhaps on certain sounds or words or in certain situations. Observers are prone to call this stuttering. Soon, too, perhaps the speaker himself, does also. Even very small children can do this.

However, not all repetitive speech is cause for alarm. When the broken flow of speech seems to signal a language difficulty, such as the search or choice of a word, it is of little importance. So, too, if the child simply seems to be hunting out a thought. Perhaps he is merely not sure in knowing when to speak. Such hesitancies are normal. They are viewed neither by the speaker nor by the listener as constituting a "disorder."

If Stuttering Becomes Obvious, What Can Be Done?

Perhaps you will have tried some of the suggestions made in this booklet. But, at the very least, try to avoid showing the struggling child—by facial expressions, by gestures, by remarks —any indication of anxious concern, impatience or irritability. An abundance of patience, tolerance and deeply genuine interest in what the child wants to say will serve as honey to the bee. Try not to interrupt him, or to plead with him. Do not ask him to repeat what he seemed unable to say a moment before. And do not, we beg you, ask him to just talk without stuttering.

Another thing. Children seem to resent very much their parents guessing what they are trying to say. They do not like having words put into their already pained mouths. When parents do this, the child often feels that the parent is not paying enough attention to what, for the child, is of greatest importance. He feels shut out. When he is not understood because of his halting speech, a gesture of affection will reassure the child that no anxiety or anger exists.

You will want to ask yourself if there is something in the speaking situation or family relationship which may be sparking the speech troubles. A new baby, too many adults with their fingers in the child's mind, new surroundings, family squabbles—all these can affect the child's inner security and bring about hesitant speech. (See especialiy pages 29-30; 46-52.)

Where May I Find Professional Help?

In every single case of suspected or beginning stuttering which does not stop within a short period, especially after using appropriate help such as that which we have discussed in this booklet, fully qualified professional consultation should be obtained. Today, there are many speech clinics in universities, hospitals, and various rehabilitation centers serving children and adults. You may obtain information from such sources nearest you or contact your state department of education. The American Speech and Hearing Association will provide you with information concerning the location of clinics and clinicians. Its address is: 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

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DATE FILMED 12/1/67